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The author discusses (1) the nature of communication, (2) sociological aspects of the communication problem, and (3) solutions to the language problem that have been tried. He believes that "there is a solution easier and more successful than multilingualism, and less discriminatory than the unilateral imposition of one national language for international contacts." He suggests Esperanto as "a logical way round inherently discriminatory multilingualism: for international communication everyone would learn a second language (Esperanto), different from his native language or the language of his state." The author discusses Esperanto itself, the ease with which it can be learned, and the extent to which it is presently used. (DO)

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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND ESPERANTO

A Convocation Lecture given at Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania on November 26, 1968

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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND ESPERANTO

We hear a great deal these days about breakdowns in communication. When students occupy campus buildings in defiance of their administrators, or refuse to attend classes, or block doorways and demonstrate, we are told that "communication" has broken down, that there is no "meaningful dialogue" between the generations. When the government is unable to convince the nation of its wisdom or its sincerity, people call the resultant failure to communicate a "credibility gap." Marshall McLuhan tells us that we do not properly understand the communications media at our disposal, and proceeds to write totally opaque prose as if to prove the fact. Theatrical innovations, new forms of the novel, attempts to find a new sense of community in various types of social living -- all these point to the same thing: men feel that in some way communication has been impaired, or no longer works, or is inadequate.

Of course, this feeling that communication is imperfect is hardly a new one. Over the years, poets and novelists, thinkers and politicians, philosophers, social reformers, have all dwelt on the theme: men are cut off from one another by barriers of selfhood, by physical and spiritual isolation.

Two of the great myths which our civilization has developed to explain man's condition touch on this problem. The Bible tells us that Adam and Eve, because of their disobedience to God, were driven from the Garden of Eden into a life of hardship and misery. This hardship and misery reveals itself in

unfulfilled desires, enmity between men, cruelty and unkindness -- in short, in the isolation of self. Christian thinkers tell us that the great antidote to sin and despair is love -- the love of God towards us; our love towards God; the love which we show towards one another. Characteristic of this love is submission, humility, tolerance, service to one's fellow men, a sense of community.

Recognition of the simultaneous human needs of selfhood and inter-dependence lies behind another myth, much appealed to by political philosophers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries -- the myth of the Social Contract. This myth states that men, realizing that they could not live in isolation, entered into an agreement by which they would sacrifice some of their personal independence in return for the benefits accruing from co-operation within a social system. This Social Contract did not eliminate individuality: it recognized that the individual could best serve his interests by living in society, but it also recognized the constant need for compromise between selfhood and social well-being.

The myth of the Fall and the myth of the Social Contract are ways of explaining a single reality -- the conflict of interest between community and individual, and the need constantly to find compromises, constantly to increase understanding. The means by which we achieve such compromise, indeed the very basis of social living, is called "communication."

There are many types of communication, ranging from the transfer of goods and the transfer of services, to the transfer of ideas and the transfer of emotions. A transportation system -- roads, railways, aircraft, ships, pipelines, and so on -- makes possible the rapid movement of goods from one

place to another, thereby facilitating the process of cooperation between communities and allowing these communities to specialize in the production of commodities for which they are especially suited. This same network of communications serves to move people from one area to another, allowing them to perform services outside their immediate families or communities, to work in one place and live in another, to be moved rapidly from place to place to solve some specific problem or minister to some special need. Ideas and emotions are transferred by such diverse media as books and newspapers, the images on a television screen, even the tolling of bells. Signs and gestures, the sense of touch, even modes of dress -- these are also means by which ideas and emotions are transferred. We can communicate with each other by the spoken word -- face to face, or by telephone, or radio, or television, or film, or recordings. We can use the written word (a visual rendering of the sounds of speech), through letters, books, magazines, the packaging of goods. The written word, along with films and recordings, communicates not only spatially but also temporally. In writing and electronic recording lies our accumulated history, the articulation of our accumulated knowledge, and our legacy to the future.

While language is by no means the only method by which we communicate ideas and emotions, it is certainly one of the most important. But, curiously, it is among the most misunderstood. Perhaps because language is so much a part of our beings, we entertain all sorts of misconceptions about it; and these misconceptions easily turn into prejudice. Prejudice about our most basic means of self-projection and social communication is dangerous indeed, and can easily lead to other kinds of prejudice. Let us reflect for a moment on the nature of linguistic communication.

Remember first that language exists only because we need to communicate. We know very little about the origins of language, but it seems safe to assume that language came into being to satisfy man's felt need to convey his ideas and desires to his fellows. To do this, he developed a system of arbitrary symbols, conveyed by speech, as the basis of a medium of communication. The symbols used in language are arbitrary in the sense that there is no inherent connection between most of the words we use and the objects they represent. The large woody plant that grows in such profusion in most parts of the world may be called tree in English, but it is arbre in French, albero in Italian, Baum in German. Tree, arbre, and so on are mere labels which we attach to the object itself.

Since language comes into being to fulfill certain needs of the community, it follows that there is no such thing as a "primitive" language as the popular imagination conceives it. People who labor under the misapprehension that there are tribes out there somewhere who are just dying to say something but have nothing beyond a few grunts to make themselves understood -- such people are flying in the face of the evidence. This evidence proves conclusively that a language is adapted to the needs of its speakers. If it handicaps these speakers, it does so only in a much more sophisticated and complex way than people are thinking of when they allude to "primitive" languages.

Sometimes, we hide our prejudice about "primitive languages" behind the word "dialect." Europeans speak languages, Africans speak dialects; educated people speak a language, uncivilized people speak a dialect. But this distinction also bespeaks cultural prejudice. A moment ago, I described language as a

system of arbitrary symbols. When these symbols vary significantly in different parts of a given geographical area, though the system is essentially the same; or when the system varies somewhat, yet the symbols remain the same -- then we may usefully refer to two dialects of the same language. In addition to regional differences, we can also define dialects in terms of variations between spoken and written language, between language of various social classes, even between the linguistic usages of various professions. Indeed, each individual has his own "idiolect," his own particular way of using language. A dialect is, then, simply a subdivision of a language.

The main determining factor in linguistic variation (or rather the lack of such variation) is the desire to communicate. We never allow our personal linguistic mannerismsto obstruct our communication for very long. A adapts his usage to suit B; B adapts his to that of A. When an Englishman visits the United States, he readily uses the term "elevator" instead of "lift," or "sidewalk" instead of "pavement"; he goes easy on the verb "to get". He does these things to make communication easier. This hypothetical Englishman's concessions to his listeners tend to grow greater the further he moves from a cosmopolitan environment. Many Americans would understand the word "lift" if he used it, but others, especially in culturally isolated areas or groups, would not. What is more, the Englishman would make greater concessions to American ways of speech the more he wished to be identified with Americans or at least not be identified with the English. His accent and usage would identify him with a certain ethnic group; to play down the identification he would avoid drawing attention to it.

The fact that a man's language identifies him with his origins implies that language is more than a means of communicating information. It is also an important means by which we establish our sense of community, our sense of belonging. One by-product of this sense of community is slang, the language of the insider. When a professor talks about "blowing his cool" he is identifying himself with his students by using their language, trying to play down the degree of separation between his group and theirs. When he deliberately talks in language they cannot understand, he is emphasizing differences, perhaps his superiority.

When a dialect group reaches out beyond its own group, it tends to become more like its surroundings: the speakers of the dialect make concessions to the speech patterns and the verbal usages of those they address. The result is a gradual erosion of the dialect in question. When such communication beyond the group ceases, the dialect develops little by little into an entirely distinct language, incomprehensible beyond its own boundaries. We can express this idea in very simple terms: when there is more communication outside a language group than within it, the group's language becomes like its neighbors; when there is little such communication, the group's language becomes unlike its neighbors.

Language carries within it, then, the identity of the group which speaks it. That is one reason why people are often so irrational and so possessive about language. It might seem rather unimportant ~~as to~~ whether one splits an infinitive or not, but when unsplit infinitives are associated with the standards and identity of the ruling class, splitting infinitives becomes an act of social

defiance or a demonstration of social impotence. We might look on with incredulity when blacks call for the teaching of Swahili in schools, but this is an important attempt to establish linguistic identity and hence a social identity.

We see examples of this drawing together and separation of linguistic usage in all types of situation. New usages rise to dominance, new words are coined, other terms drop into disrepute. In times of extensive social upheaval, as the needs of society change, language changes too. The vacuum left by the disintegration of the Roman Empire, the establishment of the modern state of Israel, these are examples of situations in which linguistic change has been rapid because society has undergone profound changes. The collapse of the Roman Empire is a rather good example of the growth of dialects: when central control ceased, the outlying areas rapidly developed their own languages, based on the language of their old masters. In our own day we have witnessed attempts to build a sense of national or racial identity through language. Hitler outlawed certain international words and replaced them with specifically German terms; in France in recent years there has been a sharp reaction against le franglais -- the appearance of masses of English words in French, largely the result of American economic dominance and pressures. The current movement away from the word "negro" is an attempt to redefine group identity.

Let me return for a moment to my general discussion of communication. Language is just one of several means of communication. Each of these means has its advantages and limitations. Some -- like highways, or television systems, or telephones -- require enormous capital investment and constant expenditure. We can say, then, that these types of communication are subject above all to economic limitations. One can only create such systems, and use them, if one can afford to do so.

Other types of communication are subject primarily to social limitations. High on the list here is language. In all our dealings with our fellows we are under constant pressure to adapt our speech to the situation in which we find ourselves, to avoid using certain turns of phrase, or certain words, under certain circumstances. We do not use the same language to our employers that we use to our closest friends; we do not speak in public in the same way in which we speak in private. If we fail to observe these conventions we are regarded as odd, or hostile, or vulgar, or impolite.

Pressure to observe such social conventions is generally not too hard to bear. In fact the very existence of the conventions sometimes makes our social contacts easier to deal with, because the conventions rule out as socially unacceptable certain kinds of behavior, generally displays of extreme emotion. But the pressure, and the need, to conform can sometimes be turned into a means to exclude certain types of person. By putting a premium on its own phraseology or intonation or accent, a given social group can exclude all those who do not share these things. A person outside the social group cannot enter it, because he does not express himself in a socially acceptable way. Even though he may speak essentially the same language as the group in question, the group refuses to communicate with him, by stressing those elements in its linguistic habits which are different from his. And what is true of language is true of all its other behavior too.

When social exclusiveness coincides with economic power (as it very frequently does), social limitations on communication turn into economic limitations. In this process language, of course, plays its part. Language is one of the means by which a man proves he is a member of a group, or demonstrates that he does not have the qualities deemed essential for membership in his group.

Sometimes exclusiveness is codified into law. Here we must make a distinction between social acceptability and legal acceptability. There are no legal means of forcing a social group to drop its disdain for people who don't share its accent, but there <u>are</u> legal means to protect the right of these people to say more or less what they like, to do and think what they like, and to express themselves in a manner more or less forceful. What is more, such legal protection certainly <u>helps</u> to reduce social exclusiveness in its most damaging manifestations. In recent years the United States Constitution has proved a major weapon in the fight against economic discrimination (though the battle has hardly begun) and also in the protection of individual rights. All too frequently, we do not apply the principles of the American constitution in our dealings with our neighbors though.

Supporting such national efforts to break down social isolation and divisiveness, is a complex of international agreements and a body of international law. There are those who feel that such agreements serve little purpose. It is certainly true that when the United States decides to protect itself against missiles in Cuba, it will gladly halt ships on the high seas in defiance of international law; and when the Soviet Union decides to silence Czechoslovakia, it will happily ignore the United Nations charter and any other document lying between itself and its goal. But even in these controversial areas international agreements do help to establish custom and develop international opinion, and in less controversial areas (postal services, airlines, shipping, railways, roads) international cooperation has had notable success.

Among the many important international agreements which the United Nations has generated is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The

Declaration consists of a preamble and thirty articles, which bring together many of the rights traditionally accorded the individual in democratic countries. Some of these rights were first enshrined in the American Constitution, others saw legal recognition (though early abrogation) in the Declaration proclaimed by the French Constitutional Convention in 1789, still others were fought over in the 19th century and have gained general recognition only in our own day. Such principles as equality before the law, the right to personal property, the right to work, the right to education, receive a place in the UN's Declaration, and such abuses as slavery and torture are specifically outlawed.

The Declaration's second article specifically forbids discrimination on grounds of race and color, sex, language, religion, and political or other opinion. The inclusion of language among this list of guaranteed freedoms might at first sight surprise us. If there are such things as racial, religious and political discrimination, is there such a thing as linguistic discrimination? Yes indeed. Clearly language may very easily be used as a weapon to prevent communication -- by the exclusion of certain languages from public life, by the formation of exclusive linguistic cliques, by identification of language with a specific social class or way of life. In international affairs, and in the life of many nations, linguistic discrimination is widespread and insidious. It takes its place beside the other forms of discrimination as a factor in social life which we must fight against at every turn.

At this point we must make a further distinction. Up to now I have been primarily concerned with the effects of language as a social indicator. By his linguistic usage a man reveals his social affiliations, and he may be subjected

to discrimination on this basis. But language is also a means of communication per se. I refrain from excessive profanity when I speak with my friends, because they would be shocked if I did not. That is social identification. But I speak English to my friends, rather than German or Tagalog, not out of deference for their feelings or a desire to be liked, but simply because they probably don't understand German or Tagalog. That is social communication. Both manifestations of language are prone to discrimination. Discrimination on the basis of the former is particularly widespread in Britain, where great stress is put on the social desirability of standard pronunciation and usage. On the basis of the latter, discrimination is very common in multilingual states and in states with sizable minority populations.

The fact that linguistic discrimination is directly connected with the means of communication makes it rather different from other kinds of discrimination and peculiarly difficult to deal with. To outlaw racial discrimination it is a simple enough matter to declare that race will no longer be a criterion in housing, employment or education. As we have discovered, that doesn't solve the problem, but it's a start. Discrimination of sex in employment practices can be made illegal in the same way. Religion and politics can easily be ruled out as criteria too. But the same is not true of language. Employment and education use language. You cannot ignore the language a person speaks, since it is his principal means of communicating with you. A man speaking only Spanish in an office of English speakers is undeniably an economic liability -- in a way in which a black office worker among whites is not.

We are all of us aware of language differences, though we seldom have to meet them at first hand. Travelling abroad, we generally remain with American friends, often staying in good hotels and visiting spots used to tourists. Our communication with the local inhabitants, generally limited to practical matters like buying things and catching planes and finding the way to somewhere, present both a challenge and a confirmation -- a challenge to our ability to talk in simple English, and a confirmation that all God's children understand it. The allusion to "all God's children" is not wholly facetious: how easily our experiences with English in foreign parts are elevated to the grand generalization, "But everyone speaks English"! The remark is both untrue and also discriminatory -- untrue because the vast majority of foreigners could not even sustain a simple conversation in English, discriminatory because if they could sustain such a conversation, that would be because they had gone to the trouble of learning the language (while our sole concession would be a determination to speak clearly).

This discriminatory attitude towards foreign languages is in part a by-product of the American melting-pot. Over the years, the immigrants who have come to the United States from all over the world have brought with them many different traditions and customs, but they have all been quite prepared, even anxious, to accept America on its own terms -- in other words, to adopt an American identity. This pattern still continues. Immigrants accept the necessity to learn English because English is the nation's language. Americans, for their part, accept that men without English should learn it. This, of course, is all perfectly reasonable. I am not about to argue that Polish immigrants should continue to speak Polish in all their dealings with Americans, or that Greek

immigrants should speak Greek. These people came to the United States of their own volition, and should, within bounds, accept what they find. But what about linguistic minorities within the United States -- Spanish Americans in Texas and New Mexico, Indians in various parts of the country? Do they have a right to schools in their respective languages, and law courts, and local government? The problem is a very difficult one, as countries in Europe have discovered in their attempts to deal with minorities. Unfortunately, Texas makes very little effort at all: it is against the law in Texas to conduct classes in any language other than English, and only English is used in all state affairs. And what about the situation of Puerto Ricans who migrate to American cities, New York for example? These people were for a long time disenfranchised, denied the right to vote which they had enjoyed in Puerto Rico simply because New York State required a knowledge of English of its voters while Puerto Rico, a United States possession, did not. This law has now been overturned, despite the opposition of the New York Times, which argued that the Spanish speaker could not possibly be politically well informed in New York (the editors of the Times should go out on the street more often) and so should not have a vote. But Puerto Ricans are discriminated against in many other ways. Did you know, for example, that a knowledge of English is required by New York State before a man can obtain a driver's license? Fine, you may say; how else could he read the signs? But the greater part of the industrialized world uses an international system of road signs requiring no knowledge of language at all. The United States prefers to deny its non-English-speakers driver's licenses -- and, of course, it duly prosecutes offenders. In fact, arrests for traffic violations have in many areas become a

weapon of discrimination against Puerto Rican minorities. I am not suggesting that traffic signs should be altered throughout the United States to satisfy a group of non-English-speaking Puerto Ricans in New York, but I am suggesting that such disregard for linguistic minorities points to a remarkable and dangerous insularity in matters linguistic.

The problem of the Puerto Ricans in New York City is just one manifestation of the difficulties arising from linguistic diversity. Broadly speaking, these difficulties fall into four categories -- psychological, sociological, technical, and economic. Let us consider the scope of such difficulties for a moment, particularly in the international sphere.

We can surely readily agree that if only a few languages are accepted as official in international meetings, members of those nations where these languages are spoken enjoy a special advantage. What is more, only these same countries can send their most competent delegates in a given field, while delegates from other countries must be qualified linguistically, as well as being specialists in their field. Regardless of how well qualified they are, they must use a language other than their native language in the conference sessions, and this is likely to put them at a serious disadvantage in rapid exchanges on the conference floor, and cause them to take refuge in prepared statements and notes worked out in advance. Away from the conference floor, and simultaneous interpretation, they may find themselves hard put to it to engage in the informal discussions which form an important part of international meetings, and at which interpretation is not normally available. Even under circumstances where it is available, it often does not work well, especially in conferences using lesser-known languages. A recent

conference of the World Association of World Federalists, for example, used English and Japanese, with simultaneous interpretation. The system failed to function because the interpreters could not keep pace with debate, and in consequence most Japanese delegates were unable even to understand the voting procedure. If we bear in mind that the international organization of conference interpreters has less than a thousand members, we shall perhaps be less inclined to conclude that interpretation provides a simple solution to the language problems of international conferences. The interpreter's work is extremely exacting. In consequence, he generally does not work for longer than fifteen minutes at a stretch, and he generally interprets into his own native language from one other language. Thus the minimal number of interpreters required at an international conference can be expressed by the formula n (n-1), where n equals the number of working languages. This figure must generally be doubled. Hence a conference using three languages requires 3 x 2 = 6 interpreters, or twelve if the conference is to consist of sessions lasting more than fifteen minutes! A conference using four languages, however, would require twice as many interpreters —4x3 = 12, x 2 =24! The disadvantages of multilingualism are immediately apparent.*

The linguistic disadvantages of our hypothetical delegate from a country whose language lacks international prestige are matched at the national level by similar disadvantages for members of minority groups whose languages are not recognized by their governments. The African child often uses one language in the home, another in primary school (if he is lucky enough to go), and a third in

*I should add that interpretation and translation are two quite separate activities requiring different skills. Translation involves the rendering in another language of written texts; interpretation involves the rendering of spoken communication).

secondary school. In some countries a fourth will be required of him in college. If he goes abroad to study, all the attendant difficulties of the foreign student will be increased by language problems, making it hard to understand lectures in the classroom, difficult to read assigned texts, and far from easy to write notes and papers. The psychological adjustment to his new environment is likely to be agonizing. Such linguistic hardships do not stand in the way of the American student, who will never have to submit to instruction in any language but English. But whereas the American economy might bear the burden of multilingualism if it had to, the developing countries of Africa labor under an enormous disadvantage. The linguistic situation resembles the economic: while the rich nations grow rich in monolingualism, Africa labors under the poverty of multilingualism; an educational system which can ill afford it must spend huge sums on language instruction and submit to inferior learning and inferior teaching. This, too, is discriminatory.

What is more, the multiplicity of language easily leads to the creation of an elite. In an African country whose official language is English or French, though that language is spoken by no more than five per cent or so of the population, the English speakers or French speakers constitute a social and political elite, an Establishment, jealous of its privileges and anxious to perpetuate itself. This is a factor to be borne in mind in international conferences too: delegates from small nations who have mastered a new language are apt to be impatient with colleagues less accomplished than themselves, and anxious to maintain their positions of superiority. Of such material is discrimination made, and it is precisely the linguists who have a psychological vested interest in language differences.

It is impossible to touch on all sociological aspects of the language problem -- the difficulties of linguistic minorities (which do not end with mere official guarantees, or even with the use of the languages in schools), the educational difficulties resulting from lack of knowledge of languages, the difficulties of publicity faced by a scientist writing in a less prominent language, the problems faced by technical experts in developing countries (where these experts' subordinates and helpers often know no European language). Then there are the difficulties faced in foreign travel. One reason why Americans feel they know the British better than the Spanish or the Italians (to say nothing of Hungarians or Poles, with whom God knows, communication is important) is because they happen to speak the same language.

I have already mentioned some of the technical problems. Translation and interpretation are not only extremely wasteful in human resources; they are also inherently inferior because they prevent direct communication. They are liable to breakdown, translation is slow, and the demand for interpreters is far in excess of the supply. It is said that one day machines will take the place of translators, but while great advances have been made, the day is still far off when a machine will be able to render a text in a new language as well as a human translator.

At present, machine translation, such as it is, is more costly than its human counterpart -- which brings me to the economics of multilingualism. It is quite impossible to calculate how many millions of dollars linguistic diversity costs the nations of the world in any given year. But a glance at the budgets of international organizations gives some indication of the problem. The cost of

the whole apparatus required for adequate translating and interpreting services is enormous. Only a very few organizations can afford such huge expense, and such services are beyond the reach of private individuals. Recently the Assistant Director General of Unesco commented: "To publish a single page of any document in four languages costs us $87; in India that sum will support someone for a whole year. In 1967 we published 16,000 such pages."

The average annual income in India is $84. By the same token, a recent UN conference on Trade and Development, held in New Delhi, cost 13,940 average Indian annual incomes in translation and interpretation alone. This represents over a million dollars, spent on the salaries and transport of 55 UN interpreters, 44 revisors, and 132 translators, and on financing the publication of translated documents. In addition, 190 language experts were hired specially for the conference.

This is but one example of the appalling cost of language diversity in international organizations. In 1968 the UN budgeted $6,700,000 for salaries alone for its translating and interpreting staff; in 1968 and 1969 translation in the Food and Agriculture Organization will cost $1,434,900; the World Health Organization spent more than a million dollars on translation and interpretation, and attendant services in 1968; for Unesco the cost was some 2½ million. In all, multilingualism cost the UN family some eighteen million dollars in 1968 -- and the cost for these organizations and the many other intergovernmental organizations continues to rise steeply.

I hope that this short excursion into the realm of linguistic discrimination and multilingualism will have convinced you that there does exist a major problem.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this problem is the fact that people seem to face it with relative equanimity. The expenditure of large sums of money, the denial of basic rights to large sections of the world's population on linguistic grounds, the hardships and difficulties faced every day by men in all walks of life because of language differences, goes relatively unheeded, even sometimes by those directly affected. Given the present state of the world's economy, the extent of our resources and the nature of the difficulties, many of these problems are virtually insoluble; but a greater awareness of the psychological, social and economic waste of it all might persuade people to seek solutions faster.

Speakers of English are in large measure responsible for this lack of awareness. We still often read that English is little by little conquering the world. The international scope of American commerce, and the economic advantages of learning English do form a powerful stimulant for its spread, but this so-called English is often a very inferior affair, and its use depends rather directly upon American influence in the area in question. History has shown a strong link between linguistic and economic domination. If, in the future, America loosens its economic hold in this or that part of the world, English will go into a decline. Speaking English in such countries is the direct result of a desire to please, and profit from, the Americans -- a kind of discrimination in reverse.

Many solutions to language problems have been tried, none of them wholly adequate and all of them involving hardship. One solution at the national level -- the American, by and large -- lies in language instruction for new immigrants.

Here the zeal of the United States is unexcelled: when I arrived in this country as a professor of English, an obliging Immigration Service sent me a letter telling me where I could go to learn the language. I declined. But where indigenous minorities exist, they must be given special facilities; this is what is done for Hungarians in Czechoslovakia, for example, where there are special Hungarian schools. Sometimes whole regions of a given country have an official language different from the national language. This is a common situation in India, and in several European countries (Yugoslavia for instance). Sometimes a country has more than one official language. Belgium has two, Canada has two, Switzerland has three (with special rights for a fourth), Cyprus has two.

The various dialects of France (some would call them languages, and Breton and Basque certainly merit the term) have no official recognition in the schools: all instruction is in Parisian French. In consequence, Breton culture is slowly but surely being stifled. In Britain, Welsh, which is protected, flourishes. While few Britons are bilingual, many Frenchman are. Owing to the conflicting demands of local dialects and a national educational system, men use the local idiom in their own region, but standard (or near-standard) French to communicate with outsiders and to read the newspaper or listen to the radio. A somewhat similar situation is the rule in rural Germany and in Italy. In Spain, Catalan, Galician, and Basque are purely and simply illegal and on occasion persecuted, but they are used extensively on the street and in the home.

The solution of the United States -- monolingualism -- and of (say) Switzerland -- multilingualism -- is matched on the international level by those who maintain that all men will one day adopt English, and those who put their faith in foreign language teaching. Both schools of thought have received much encouragement in recent years. The United States and Britain spend large sums of money

every year through USIA and the British Council to set up English classes in many countries and generally to further the study of English. The Alliance Française does the same for French, and the Germans and the Italians also have smaller programs along the same lines. Foreign language teaching has undergone a notable increase in this country over the last twenty years, boosted by the NDEA and other governmental initiatives. The United States has also done a great deal for the study and analysis of the world's lesser known languages and for linguistics in general. Foreign language teaching has done wonders to bring American children to an awareness of foreign languages and cultures, and given them a sense of the relativity of their own. There are few greater services you can do for yourself than to learn another language: it is an almost essential part of one's own personality development.

But there is a solution easier and more successful than multilingualism, and less discriminatory than the unilateral imposition of one national language for international contacts. I spoke earlier of men who speak a local language, for local communication, and a national language, for national communication. Is it not logical that for international communication we choose an international language? This brings me finally to the matter of Esperanto.

Esperanto is a logical way round inherently discriminatory multilingualism: for international communication everyone would learn a second language (Esperanto), different from his native language or the language of his state. This may sound like a kind of levelling down -- merely making everyone learn a new language instead of just some people. But in fact the people who must now learn English or another of the major languages to communicate internationally would have a much easier time of it: Esperanto is a lot easier to learn than any of the world's national languages.

Esperanto is a constructed language, made up of a number of elements from existing national languages, combined into a very simple structure. It was designed specifically for international use and, even though it is based on European languages, its simple construction makes it easier for people of all nations to learn -- a fact attested by its enthusiastic following in the Far East, especially Japan. You may object that a language cannot be constructed -- that it must grow as naturally as a living organism. But that is only partly true. A language is not a living organism: it is the product of living organisms. If men use a language, it lives; if men do not use it, it dies. The proof of language, then, lies with its speakers, not the means by which it comes into being. Actually, several languages in national use today are at least partially the result of language planning. Norwegian was altered by government decree; Hebrew was modernized extensively; Indonesian is the result of a compromise. They have all come to life because men use them and speak them. What is more, their origin only confirms that they are instruments of social communication: there was a need for a language; a language arose to fill that need. Esperanto has the same kind of background. The need for an international language produced the skeleton of a language (sixteen basic rules and a rudimentary vocabulary) in 1887, and out of this evolved present-day Esperanto, which is spoken by thousands of people in all parts of the world,and which seems to be gaining greater acceptance as time passes. Esperanto has its own culture, its own literature, its own organizations, its own press. Some hundred magazines are published in the language, a significant book is published in Esperanto at least every week, and in some countries Esperanto is taught in the public schools. There are frequent international meetings in Esperanto, it is used in commerce, and widely used in tourism.

It may seem surprising that a language of sixteen basic rules and simple structure could attain such expressiveness and widespread use. But the rules and the structure, while they do guarantee that the language will be easy to learn, only tell part of the story: since 1887 the vocabulary has grown richer, new possibilities have been exploited in the language, and, in short, the language has changed and developed like any other. But it has kept its simplicity even as it has grown richer: it remains easy to learn even though it has a rich and growing literature, and even though it is used and spoken all over the world. Sometimes we are told that Esperanto will break up into dialects. But as long as it is used primarily for international communication on a worldwide scale, this cannot happen for reasons we have already explored. Sometimes we are told that the language is inexpressive -- but I have yet to have someone who actually knows the language tell me that. Sometimes we are told that no one speaks it, but that is total nonsense. Sometimes we are told that it is ugly -- but I will prove such sceptics wrong before I am through. Others say that Esperanto has no practical value, but that, too, is a judgment based on ignorance.

My own principal interest in Esperanto is literary. I have studied literary works in Esperanto extensively; I have also read many works translated from lesser-known languages, with the result that I have a greater knowledge of, say, Hungarian or Estonian literature than most of my colleagues. In Madrid this last summer I lectured on English poetry to an Esperanto audience. I have discussed literature with citizens of a dozen different countries. Outside purely literary interests, there are few European countries I have never visited -- and in all of them I have discussed politics, social life and similar matters with Esperanto speakers native to the countries concerned. My correspondence over the years has been vast and informative. No one can tell me that Esperanto has no practical use. If my interests were different, I should find other ways to turn Esperanto to good advantage.

Those sceptics who say it is not possible to study Esperanto are even more wrong. Some fifteen thousand school children learn it each year in school, and there are several colleges and universities, especially in Europe, which offer courses in Esperanto. Foreign language study is often advocated as a means to widen a child's horizons, but Esperanto as a school subject has special advantages. First, because Esperanto is easy, pupils rapidly reach a level at which the language can be put to practical use, in correspondence, in conversation, in reading; second, Esperanto puts them in contact not with one culture, but with all cultures. By correspondence they can gather material for classes in history and social studies and a range of other subjects -- they can even contribute to little magazines produced by international groups of schools -- and ultimately they can use Esperanto for travel and other purposes. Organizations, principally the Universal Esperanto Association, exist at the national and international level to facilitate contacts. For students and young people there is a whole range of possibilities for genuine international experience -- and Esperanto is easy to learn and use.

Of course, Esperanto will not solve all the language problems there ever were: many may well be insoluble. It will take years to persuade international organizations to use it, and years to make its use in schools at all general. But in recent years there have been bold beginnings. In 1966, a proposal was submitted to the United Nations calling for the support of Esperanto as the international language. It bore one million individual signatures, and the signatures of 3,850 organizations with nearly 73,000,000 members. In recent months Esperanto has several times been the subject of insertions in the Congressional Record, in connection

with an article published by the California Teachers Association Journal, and in connection with an International Scout Jamboree which used Esperanto. Another major development is the recent establishment of an Esperantic Studies Foundation, designed to stimulate scholarly study of all aspects of the language problem and especially of the educational value of Esperanto and linguistic, sociological, and psychological aspects of its use. A new scholarly periodical covers similar ground. The language is now taught in several schools in California, and even the Valley Forge Military Academy in Pennsylvania recently began a course in it. In fact, at the moment there is an acute shortage of competent teachers and more are badly needed. It may just be that Esperanto offers a solution to an age-old but daily increasing problem.

I began with Genesis and the Social Contract. While Esperanto is hardly the answer to Original Sin, its beauties and its utility may well balance in a new way the individual's need to communicate, with the needs of the community to communicate with him. We ignore such new developments in the science of communication at our peril. If we continue to ignore the growing dimension of the international language problem, we are willfully shutting ourselves off from a redeployment of the human resources (translators and others) now engaged in the essentially negative process of sorting out linguistic muddles. One of the greatest of all poets in Esperanto, the Hungarian Kalman Kalocsay, contemplating in 1939 the contrast between technological advances and men's miserable efforts to live in harmony with one another, pictured society as Moses, who stood within

reach of the Promised Land but died by the Lord's command on Mount Nebo. The story has a lesson for us: we, if we choose to do so, can eliminate the international language problem and go a long way towards stamping out linguistic discrimination. There are solutions ready to hand.

La gren' inundas. Riĉon vome ĵetas
maŝinoj. Fluas kun miel' kaj mosto
la akvo. Flugas por la Pentekosto
elektraj langoj. Paradizo pretas.
Scienco pompas. Brila art' raketas.
Kaj tamen grincas la malsat' kaj frosto.
Ho kruda fato tranĉa ĝis la osto:
la tempoj grandas kaj la homo etas.

Nur kelkaj ĝustaj paŝoj kaj la vojo
trakurus kampojn de eterna ĝojo,
sed ĉie blinda kaj malica strebo.
Atendus prete nin la Kanaano,
sed ni en lupa lukto por la pano
mizere mortas sur la monto Nebo.

"The Grain floods out. Machines spew out their riches. The waters run with honey and wine. Electric tongues fly for Pentecost. Paradise stands ready. Science is filled with pomp. Brilliant art rockets forth. Yet still only hunger and frost grind on. O savage Fate, biting to the bone: the times are mighty and ~~the men are~~ man is small. Only a few paces, and the road would run through fields of eternal happiness, but -- everywhere blind and malicious struggling. Canaan would stand ready for us, but we, in wolfish striving for bread, die in misery on Mount Nebo."

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